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RECENT SOCIOLOGICAL TENDENCIES IN FRANCE.

It is the purpose of the present article to call attention to some of the recent tendencies in sociological discussion in France, and to offer some comments from the point of view of psychology and the history of thought.

Recent discussions¹ in France, as is indicated by the titles cited, have dealt largely with the province and methods of sociology. The works of Tarde and Durkheim² are the most thoroughgoing in this respect and have occasioned most of the other literature here noticed. What then are the conceptions of the distinctive characteristic of social facts, the subject matter for sociology?

M. Tarde, as is well known, finds the characteristic of social phenomena to be imitation.³ He is especially concerned in the first of the two works under consideration with the problem of marking off sociology from the history of societies and from biology. As opposed to certain evolutionists who regard all institutions (law is the special institution here taken for illustration of the general principles) as having passed through the same stages under the influence of biological causes, Tarde holds that these causes are by no means the only forces at work. Social facts may be the effect of invention and discovery or of

¹ *Les transformations du droit*, G. TARDE, 2 ième ed., Alcan, 1894. Review of the above, R. BERTHELOT, *Revue de metaphysique et de morale*, 1893, pp. 507-18. *L'Imitation et la logique sociale*, R. BERTHELOT, *ibid.* 1894, pp. 93-7. *Le problème de la sociologie*, G. SIMMEL, *ibid.*, 1894, pp. 497-504. *Les règles de la méthode sociologique*, E. DURKHEIM, *Revue philosophique*, May-August, 1894. *La sociologie: ses conditions d'existence, son importance scientifique et philosophique*, M. BERNÈS, *Revue de met. et de morale*, March 1895. *Sur la méthode de la sociologie*, M. BERNÈS, *Revue philos.*, March and April 1895. *L'Année sociologique*, 1894, P. LAPIE, *Revue de met. et de la morale*, May 1895. *La logique sociale*, G. TARDE, Paris, Alcan, 1895.

² His articles cited above are a sort of methodological supplement to his work *La division du travail social*.

³ *Les lois de l'imitation*, 1890.

imitation. In the first case we seek explanations for similar social facts in the problems set man by his environment and in the response due to his constitution. This is to explain by physical and physiological (why not psychological?) laws. In the second case we have the data for a "pure" as opposed to a "general" sociology since we have to do only with *social* causes. These social causes all falling under the principle of imitation may be of two sorts, logical or non-logical. Imitation may be called logical when a given invention is imitated because more useful, *i. e.*, according better with the end fixed by the desires, or because it is believed to be truer, *i. e.*, more in accord with the principle underlying the beliefs of the imitator. When, on the other hand, imitation is caused by a preference due to the origin or date of an invention it may be called non-logical.

M. Berthelot in his review of Tarde objects that to limit social facts to those in which imitation is involved is to beg the question. If we are to refer every conscious activity other than imitation to the mental and this in turn to the physiological constitution, why is it not equally true that imitation is itself to be biologically explained? We cannot escape biology in this way. There are many inventions necessary for the existence of society and due to the influence of the social group. These are the true subjects for investigation by a "pure" sociology, and should form the content of social logic. Imitation comes into the sphere of sociology just so far as it is thus necessary. It should be subordinate to social logic, not the first principle under which social logic is ranged as a minor part. To make imitation the sole principle is to use it as the Ionic philosophers used water, air, etc.

Simmel also attempts to delimit the sociological from the social in a broad sense. If sociology embraces all that happens in society and simply reduces the individual to the social, it would be merely a general method as, *e. g.*, induction—not a special science. But just as in psychology we separate out the content of the mental states and consider only the form, so sociology must isolate the distinctively social, and consider the *form* of association as such, leaving the content, *i. e.*, the objects and

interests realized by association, to be the subject-matter of the specific historical and material sciences. This "form" in question is reciprocal action, association. We are to study the special forms of subordination, concurrence, imitation, opposition, division of labor, found in the various types of social groups. But we must bear in mind that phenomena are not social merely because they are parallel, nor do similarities and regularities established by statistics belong to our science if each has an individual cause. Not what takes place *in* society but what takes *by* society is the field of sociology.

The criticism which Berthelot applies to Tarde above might also be applied to the criterion for social facts propounded by Durkheim. According to the latter a social fact comprises every kind of action, whether fixed in definite law or not, which is capable of exercising an external constraint upon the individual, or it may be otherwise defined as one which is general throughout a given society and has a proper existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations. Language, laws both statute and moral, religious beliefs, financial systems impose themselves upon the individual. They are general because collective (*i. e.*, obligatory) and not *vice versa*. A collective sentiment which flashes into life in an assembly is something quite other than the common element of all the individual sentiments. It is a product of the common life.

M. Durkheim then goes on to an elaborate and comprehensive exposition of the methods to be employed by sociology.¹ These methods include—

(1) Rules relating to observation of social facts. These rules are: (*a*) consider social facts as things. Bacon's "idols" all find their counterparts in social science at present. Comte, with his law of the historical development of humanity, Spencer, with his idea of coöperation, spontaneous or imposed, as the essential characteristic of society, make preconceived theories

¹ The following résumé, as well as some other portions, of this article, is expanded from accounts which I have given in the *Psychological Review* for May, July and November, 1895.

rather than actual facts the starting point. (*b*) In defining and grouping phenomena such as crime, the family, etc., use at first external marks only, not what may be deemed the essential characteristic. This last should be left to emerge as the result of our investigation, not assumed at the outset, nor should we fix on merely a part of the class of facts and test the rest by a standard so derived. (*c*) Study especially the consolidations of social facts in law, proverbs, modes, etc., *e.g.*, the law of succession for determining the actual view of the family relations which has found a permanent form.

(2) Rules for distinguishing the pathological from the normal. It is a much mooted question whether sociology shall rest with a scientific ascertainment of facts, or whether it shall attempt to become of practical value by telling what *should* be. It is of course evident that social health is desirable; can we point out in what it consists? The ordinary method is to assume some criterion of health at the start (freedom from suffering, adaptation to environment), but these are either arbitrary or impracticable. The true objective method is to take for our criterion at the outset only an external mark, *viz.*, define the normal, merely as the general. Hence normal = the mean, diseased = the exceptional. But it is evident that greater frequency must ordinarily be due to superiority, to health. (Durkheim here obviously either must leave out the notion of moral or æsthetic superiority, or make them equivalent to physical superiority, or, assume that survival of the fittest will secure the morally fittest—assumptions as serious as those to which he objects); hence (*a*) we may control our results by seeking the cause of the generality of a given phenomenon in its relation to the general conditions of life in the type in question, and (*b*) this becomes especially important in the case of a social species in a transitional stage.

(3) For making the classification into social types the objective principle to be adopted as our standard is that of simplicity, *i. e.*, we ask whether a given group is made up of units which enclose other units more simple than itself.

(4) Rules for explaining social facts. (*a*) It is common to find the reason of a fact in its utility. This is to confound final with efficient causation and is no more admissible here than in natural science. Function and cause must be examined separately. (But as M. Bernès insists in his article, a distinguishing mark of society is intelligent action. While then it by no means follows that the actual use was foreseen and so consciously aimed at by the social group, it is nevertheless quite possible that this may have been the case. To exclude all teleological explanation from history is to assume that social facts are in no wise different from physical facts; it begs the question in advance.) (*b*) the cause of a social fact must always be sought in preceding social facts, not in states of individual consciousness. (*c*) The function of a social fact should be sought in the relation it sustains to some social end. (*d*) The first origin of every social process should be sought in the constitution of the internal social medium. This will depend upon two factors: (*a*) the number of social units, the "volume" of society; (*β*) the degree of concentration, the "dynamic density," which is in turn a function of the number of individuals who are in commercial and social relations. If we do not adopt this plan we are reduced to explain social progress by "tendencies" instead of by real causes; and further we are forced to treat all as one species in greater or less stages of advancement.

(5) Methods of induction. (*a*) The doctrine of plurality of causes, bound up with Mill's philosophic presuppositions is to be rejected. The same effect is not produced by different causes. (*b*) The most valuable of the inductive methods for our purpose is that of concomitant variations, for which we may draw our facts either from a single unique society at different times, or from several societies of the same kind, or from several of different kinds.

The three articles of M. Bernès are devoted in part to a criticism of Durkheim but develop also the author's own views of the province and method of the science. The two dominant characteristics of contemporary sociology are declared to be, (*a*)

imitation of natural science, especially biology, and (*b*) absolute opposition to subjective (psychological) sociology under all its forms, in particular the refusal to attribute any rôle to the reflective will of the members of society. These two characteristics are sources of fundamental errors. To make sociology purely "objective" is to deprive it of its essential character. The common fault of both subjective and objective sociology is to identify the subjective with the individual, whereas by looking within we may pass the bounds of individuality as truly as by looking without. The society of which we form a part is within us as truly as we are within it. Sociability, more or less conscious, is as truly an element in the social reality of the present as is any objective social phenomenon. Society is a "becoming," as well as a thing. In proportion as it more nearly approaches coördinate, conscious action and corresponds better to its definition—in proportion, that is, as it creates itself—it becomes more completely an object of science; but a science whose laws are at once objective and ideal.

M. Tarde's *Logique Sociale* is too important a work for adequate notice here. I may mention, however, its relation to his former work and its general purpose. As indicated by its title it aims to discover the necessary conditions of society. As Kant's logic asked "How is knowledge possible?" so social logic asks "How is society possible?" and finds its social categories, permanent, necessary conditions of stable equilibrium of society. These are either (*a*) logical, viz., language and the deity, or (*b*) teleological, conceptions of good and evil. We study, then, the judgment and will at work in society. Society began when the judgments and wills of individuals came consciously into contact in agreement or discord. Beliefs and desires constitute the body of our conscious life and so the sources of social phenomena. Imitation is but the social memory, an indispensable condition, but not the most prominent feature of social consciousness. After a preliminary chapter on individual logic the categories cited above are studied as conditions of society, various analogies are discovered (or in some cases one is tempted to say invented) between the

social and the individual consciousness, the laws of the great inventions by which society progresses are studied, and then the author passes to the applications of his principles to language, religion, political economy, art, and the sentiments (*le coeur*). It is scarcely probable that the categories announced will maintain themselves as the only or correct ones, but the attempt to discover and develop these systematically can hardly fail to make for real progress.

From the discussions already noted, and from the character of other works noted by Lapie in his summary, it is evident that there is a general tendency to recognize a more intimate relation of sociology to psychology. As in America it has been claimed that it is the "psychic factor" which is most important (Ward) or that sociology is really a part of psychology (Giddings), so French writers are becoming dissatisfied with mechanical and biological conceptions and seeking for more adequate categories. The prevailing opposition to subjective (psychological) sociology, in particular the refusal to attribute any *rôle* to the reflective will of members of society is declared to be fatal to an appreciation of the really distinguishing mark of society, viz., intelligent action. Lapie admits the prevalence hitherto of biological conceptions but sees in nearly all the literature of the past year the signs of a new era. This is shown (*a*) in the growing dissatisfaction with the word "organism," (*b*) in the definition of social facts and (*c*) in the views as to what constitutes explanation of social facts.

It is objected that the word "organism" is a biological term which has exercised a seductive but unfortunate influence on sociological thought, nor is the objection met entirely by prefixing the adjective "social." Societies are rather *êtres spirituels*. This dissatisfaction has been commented upon by the editor in a former number of this journal. Some remarks from another point of view suggest themselves. It is undoubtedly unfortunate to use an inappropriate category. Nothing can speak more eloquently on this point than the history of psychology itself. The *tabula rasa*, the "association" of ideas, the "Statik und

Mechanik der Vorstellungen” have drawn the psychologist into numerous snares. But on the other hand it should be remembered that nearly all psychical terms (*e. g.* “psychical” itself) bear within them the history of the development of the concept for which they stand. If the sociologists give a new content to the conception of society it will not be difficult to put a new meaning into the term. Nor would this be so much putting a new meaning into the term as bringing out the implied significance of the word itself. For as Kant pointed out¹ when alluding to the use of the term “organization” to denote the body politic, this is appropriately used for a state in which every member is both means and end to others and to the whole just because we can understand any organized structure of nature only by the aid of categories drawn from the mental life. Even though we may be obliged to say that our concept is an analogy merely, and not a constitutive category, it remains true that our only way of conceiving an organized and self-organizing being is by the idea of the reciprocal relation of parts and whole, and we can conceive the unity of a manifold only in terms of consciousness.² The term then may well enough be retained if we are careful to recognize its implications.

But there are conceivable advantages from making a wider use in sociology than has been customary of another term more distinctly set apart for the psychological sphere, viz., the term person. This may at once suggest the objection that we are hypostatizing an abstraction if we speak of society as a person, since society is composed of individuals and has no distinct existence. But it should be scarcely necessary to explain that I use the word in its present psychological sense and not in its old metaphysical sense of “simple substance.” The “person” exists *in* the various states, feelings, etc., not apart from them, and these in turn are no longer conceived as though independent entities, coming into association, inhibiting each other and

¹ *Kr. d. Urtheilskraft*, § 65, H. V. 387.

² So the demand for some principle that should afford the unity seen in organic beings led Leibniz to revive the entelechy of Aristotle as the monad. Cf. WINDELBAND, *History of Philos.*, p. 422, note 6.

so on, but rather as phases of a continuous activity, isolated for convenience in treatment. The "self," as Professor James has brilliantly shown, is a very complex and even, so to speak, plural being. Personality, regarded as the purposive, interrelated and unified activity of various desires may thus be of all grades according to the degree to which impulses have passed into conscious desires, and desires in turn have become systematized into unity of steadfast purpose. With this in mind Wundt¹ urges, that the social person is as "real" as the individual person; "*so viel Actualität, so viel Realität*" is true in either sphere.

Taking such a conception of personality as an analogy or guiding clue, many fruitful suggestions, it seems to me, may come to the sociologist. True it is that in individual and in society the early life is impulsive, unrelated, with little conscious unity of purpose,² yet with language and religion and art, with industrial and intellectual coöperation, many a people has come to "know what it wants," and to act unitedly in order to get it. As Bernès puts it, "Every collective aspiration which by its realization results in consolidating the group, in making it more complex, more plastic, more conscious of itself, becomes thereby a cause of progress. Society corresponds better to its definition in proportion as it creates itself." This consideration of the developing social consciousness will determine the categories which we are to apply to the explanation of its movements. We examine, of course, the reactions of structure and function, we observe the influence of natural selection upon choices (Giddings), but we bear in mind that "response to environment" in the case of conscious intelligence may mean a response which transforms the environment as well as a response which is modified by it. Just in proportion as man individually or collectively comes to consciousness must we use the category³ of purpose or

¹ See his *Logik*, 2te Auf. 1895, Bd. II., Abth. II., pp. 291 ff., and 611 ff., for discussion of these conceptions.

² MR. WARD, in his "Psychic Factor in Civilization," has emphasized this stage of the "social person," but the stage is only a rudimentary one.

³ Cf., for the use of the category of "Zweck" in explaining history, A. RIEHL, *Science and Metaphysics*, last chapter.

end in explaining his activity. Just in so far can we look for voluntary change of activity. Society, like the individual, *can* move forward, if it will, but to "will" means for society, as for the individual, a completely intelligent and "mediated" desire, not a mere impulse nor a blind though intense feeling. Numerous other principles will suggest themselves, such as the relation of sociological theory to practice where evidently the greatest current need is that felt by Socrates for the individual, self-examination and an insight into the true good of life that shall afford a criterion of the value of particular acts and aims. But I pass on to notice another illustration of the psychological tendency, viz., the definitions offered of social facts.

Here indeed the intimate relation to psychology seems often to be felt as an embarrassment. If, as by some, social facts are defined as psychical facts, how shall we distinguish them from the facts studied by psychology? Where draw the line between social and individual psychology? In some cases, at least, the difficulty seems due to a lack of clearness on the relation between the individual and the social, which has its counterpart in the history of thought in the controversies over the particular and the universal. A statement like that of Durkheim's, quoted above, that a "collective sentiment which flashes into life in an assembly is something quite other than the common element of all the individual sentiments," seems to be aimed at such statements as those of Mill, "men are not, when brought together, converted into another kind of substance;" "human beings in society have no properties but those which are derived from and may be resolved into the laws of the nature of individual man." But it really suffers from the same individualism. *There is no individual man* for ethics, for psychology, for logic, or for sociology, except by abstraction,—that is if by individual man we mean a being not influenced by social forces,—*nor are there any feelings, thoughts or volitions in any man which are independent of such forces.* On the other hand, there is no social or collective sentiment which exists except in the medium of individual consciousness. In the words of Sigwart, "there are no thoughts

which think themselves, no language which has existed except in the speech of the individual, no belief and no science which has shone like a universal sun above the heads of individuals, no constitution which has existed elsewhere than in the consciousness, the will, the feeling of duty or fear, of the particular citizen."¹ Social psychology will not then look for an entirely different set of psychical states from those which individual psychology studies (of course it may be interested in some more than in others); it will rather study a different aspect of the concrete facts of life of which other aspects are studied by individual psychology,² just as social logic may study the same concrete facts as the philosophy of law or political science. Rousseau's ecstatic trance when the thoughts of his first discourse came before him is of interest to psychologist, historian, and sociologist, not to say physiologist and alienist.

The third respect in which the psychological tendency appears is in the general inclination to find explanations in psychological laws. This is seen by Lapie in several works of the past year, the most notable exception being Durkheim. Here too there is room for a careful criticism and clearing up of just what is meant by explanation, but this would lead beyond the limits of the present paper.

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¹ *Logic* (Eng. trans.), Vol. II., p. 447. The whole paragraph is an excellent statement of the relations of the individual to the social.

² Cf. Wundt, *Logik* (2te Auf.), Bd. II., Abth. II., pp. 231 ff.